

Title: **The Picture Is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp!**

Passage: **Ruth 4:13-17**

Theme: **Mosaic of God's Providence: Big Picture Made up of Many Small Ones**

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{Read Passage}

[i] I've always been into collecting things

As a child – bugs and reptiles. Also bb cards (have quite a large & mostly worthless collection gathering dust).

For a brief time I collected stamps. Long before t/days of t/internet I would send for stamps from the Mystic Stamp Co. Camden, New York

Stamps I find interesting – miniature pieces of art.

*If your art collection was no more than a collection of postage stamps you'd probably be a little person (pun).*

Art is bigger than that.

Artistic glory of God's creation is bigger than anything that anyone could possibly put on canvas.

Like an unrivaled work of art - Your eyes capture t/beauty of God's creation in all its fulness (why if you go to places like the Grand Canyon you stand in awe and take pictures but t/pictures never do justice to what you see w/your naked eye).

It's about the big picture.

Same could be said for God's Providential, Sovereign, Free Working in History.

It's bigger than a postage stamp!

A generation or two ago J.B. Phillips wrote a classic little book (wasn't one when he wrote it!) called "Your God is Too Small"

In that book he tells us how a "small god" is an "unreal god"

To SOME people the mental image of God is a kind of blur of disappointment. "Here," they say resentfully and usually with more than a trace of self-pity, "is One whom I trusted, but He let me down." The rest of their lives is consequently shadowed by this letdown. . . .

Such a god is, of course, in the highest degree inadequate. It is impossible for people who have persuaded themselves that God has failed, to worship or serve Him in any but a grudging and perfunctory spirit. What has usually happened to such people is that they have set up in their minds what they think God ought or ought not to do, and when He apparently fails to toe their particular line they feel a sense of grievance. Yet it is surely more sensible, as well as more fitting, for us human beings to find out, as far as we can, the ways in which God works. We have to discover as far as we can the limits He has set Himself for the purposes of this Great Experiment that we call Life—and then do our best to align ourselves with the principles and co-operate with the purposes that we have certainly had no say in deciding, but which nevertheless in our highest moments we know are good. God will inevitably appear to disappoint the man who is attempting to use Him as a convenience, a prop, or a comfort, for his own plans. God has never been known to disappoint the man who is sincerely wanting to co-operate with His own purposes.

There will always be times when from our present limited point of view we cannot see the wood for the trees. Glaring injustice and pointless tragedy will sometimes be quite beyond our control and our understanding.

..... (Ruth==>)

*Justice will be fully vindicated when the curtain falls on the present stage, the house-lights go on, and we go out into the Real World.*

The pic is bigger than we think –

**[ii] But there's another side to all this**

T/picture of life from God's persp. is bigger than a postage stamp. –  
BUT – That big picture is made up of lots of little pictures.

*Have u evr seen a “Photographic mosaic?”*

You know what a mosaic is? – a picture that's made up out of many diff. small parts of various colors.

A PM is a big picture (photograph) that is made up of 100s / 1000s tiny photographs – even photographs that are all diff. (no 2 alike).

From a distance (the big picture) you see a single image.

From up close (the smaller picture) you see lots of different images.

Shades and placement of t/diff. images all integral to making up t/big picture. Cannot be random – there has to be precision of each small piece in order for it to fit into and make sense of t/whole.

If you're tracking w/me . . .

[iii] Think about God's Providence – how He controls all things guiding them toward His perfect will (Eph. 1:11)

That happens at several different levels.

Big picture, yes. But t/BP is made up of lots of little pictures.

Make it personal. Think of your own life. Big picture – and that picture isn't finished. That big pic is made up of lots of diff. pics that He is arranging w/i your life to make a single Mosaic – a pic that isn't destined to collect dust on its own wall in an isolated room – no a pic. that will ultimately fit into a much larger Mosaic.

*Think about it – your life is bigger than postage stamp even though it's made up of myriads of postage-sized experiences.*

*Your life in total, t/big picture – is part of a much larger picture of God's grand and glorious work.*

The mosaic of God's providence.

[iv] We see all of that portrayed in t/book of Ruth

A Moabite named Ruth living in a pagan land 3 millenia ago is destined to meet up w/a Jewish family trying to escape a famine. She & her sister marry into this family that is then struck w/tragedy when her brother-in-law, father-in-law, and her own husband die. She's left, childless & destitute w/her grieving mother-in-law whom she accompanies back to Beth. in t/land of Israel.

Over 10 yrs. of life hit hard w/wave after wave of disappointment.

Listen again to what I read a moment ago from J.B. Philips ==>

*To SOME people the mental image of God is a kind of blur of disappointment. "Here," they say resentfully and usually with more than a trace of self-pity, "is One whom I trusted, but He let me down." The rest of their lives is consequently shadowed by this letdown. . . .*

What did Naomi say when she and Ruth arrived in Beth (1:20–21)?  
20 . . . . “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 “I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty.

*There will always be times when from our present limited point of view we cannot see the wood for the trees. Glaring injustice and pointless tragedy will sometimes be quite beyond our control and our understanding.*

**The Picture of Life is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp** – even if that postage stamp is marked “10 years.”

All t/little pictures we see in t/Book of Ruth come together as one big *Photographic mosaic* that made up a much larger pic.

What have we seen so far? If we were making a photomosaic of Ruth what snapshots would be use?

Picture of a dark time in t/history of Israel – Judges.

// of a famine // a family living in those dire times (Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, and their 2 sons) // Pagan land, Moab // Moabitess named Ruth // 3 funerals as Elimelech & his 2 sons die // pictures of grieving widows, stained w/tears // picture of a bitter home-going to Beth. // Ruth gleaning in a field // a kinsman-redeem named Boaz, & a pic of risky righteousness on a threshing floor // picture of love in jeopardy & legal proceedings at a town gate.

All of those snapshots would come together to form a pic. of a happy ending.

Zoom out.

Even that picture makes up a much larger picture. For who was to know that t/happy ending would preserve not only t/Davidic dynasty but – most imp. – t/family line thru King David that would bring forth JC t/Lord & Savior of sinners?! (can u say “wow”)

That brings us back to chapter 4 which is ==>

#### **IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)**

There r 2 scenes in this last act.

##### **A. Scene One: Resolving Legal Matters (vv. 1-12)**

When t/scene opens it's early in t/morning. Boaz at t/town gate. That's where official business was conducted in a village like Beth. Boaz is looking for someone – a relative.

That all goes back to chapter 3.

Ruth by her actions {describe} proposes marriage to B.

He is to be her kinsman-redeemer {describe}

Legal issue – Boaz knows of a nearer relative who would have right of first refusal. He was next in line to take Ruth as his wife, Boaz after him. Boaz would do what's right {cite vv. 12-13}

About ==>

##### ***1. Trusting in a Sovereign Loving God***

Trust (another word for “faith”).

Faith requisite for living a life pleasing to God.

Hebrews 11:6 **And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**

We saw some that relate to this mandate that we trust God & do right.

**a. God is Glorified When We Follow Through and Follow the Rules (1-2)**

**(1) Boaz said he'd take care of things and he does**

He follows thru on his words in 3:13 where he tells Ruth ==>

“Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives.

**Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there,**

Boaz didn't delay. First thing in the morning Ruth went home and he went to t/town gate. He did what God would have him do – search out t/closer relative to offer him what was rightly His – by t/rules – Ruth.

**b. God is Glorified When We Are People of Integrity (3-4)**

**(1) Everything is open and above-board**

No “behind the scenes” deals going on. Boaz is up front. He has witnesses. He's not doing an end-around t/Law. T/elders are there. They are all at t/town gate. Others are watching. He has t/other party in t/legal matter right there in t/flesh! This is a court-room setting.

**(2) Boaz makes his announcement before them all:**

**Then he said to the closest relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.**

**“So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’”**

**c. God is Glorified When We Are People of Wisdom (5)**

That God is in control, that He will work out His will, that we need to be truthful and upfront doesn't mean we aren't to prayerfully strategize **“shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”**

**(1) You don't negotiate a deal without using wisdom**

**(a) The Fact is, Boaz has a trump card ==> Ruth**

**(2) Let's go back to our scene**

In front of them all, Boaz turns to the nearest relative and says ==>  
**“Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.**

**“So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’”**

**And he said, “I will redeem it.”**

Boaz is doing the right thing and it looks like it's going to backfire.

But he's trusting in a sov. God who controls all things even t/decisions of men.



Just as we are about to say, *"No! Don't let this other guy take Ruth!"*

Boaz drops t/trump card in v. 5 ==>

**Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased,**

Boaz is being shrewd (in this case it's an application of wisdom). But he's not acting unethically – he's still operating with honesty & integ.

Can see t/rel. thinking to himself, *"Great, I knew there was a catch."*

Boaz gives t/reason in t/second half of v. 5 ==>

**"in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."**

### **(3) Boaz is following the Law as outlined in Deut. 25**

Purpose: that the deceased has a name that is not blotted out of Israel

We see this in Deut. 25:5-10 5 *"When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.*

Boaz knows that ==>

*a. God is Glorified When We Follow Through and Follow the Rules*

*b. God is Glorified When We Are People of Integrity (3-4)*

*c. God is Glorified When We Are People of Wisdom (5)*

*d. God is Glorified When We Trust Him Regardless of the Consequences (6-8)*

**And the closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I jeopardize my own inheritance.**

He repeats ==>

**Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.”**

The deal is sealed. What follows is an announcement and a blessing.

5<sup>th</sup> / last point ==>

#### **e. God is Glorified When Others See and Praise Him (9-12)**

Summation of all living for the bel. in JC. Not about us // our way // desires // our name. God being glorified. He's not glorified thru manipulation; dishonesty; selfish ambition.

#### **(1) Boaz Makes His Announcement**

**Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.**

**“Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.”**

#### **(2) Threefold blessing**

#### ***e. God is Glorified When Others See and Praise Him (9-12)***

**And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses.**

**(1) First Part of the Blessing (v. 11a)**

**May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel;**

**(2) Second Part (11b)**

**and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.**

**(3) Third Aspect of this three-fold blessing (v. 12)**

**“Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”**

W/that prophetic pronouncement t/Curtain falls on scene 1.

{ {Brief Intermission} }

We come to t/last scene of t/entire book. The drama is about over.

**B. Scene Two: Romance and Redemption (vv. 13-17)**

These verses (13-17) are t/culmination of t/entire book.

(Peak, high point, pinnacle, height, highlight, apex, acme, summit, apogee)

Here is where t/last pieces fit into t/Mosaic.

It's all about a child, a son, a go'el, a redeemer.

So essential that we have what's called an “inclusio” marked by a son's birth in vv. 13 and 17:

13 **and she gave birth to a son**

17 **a son has been born**

It's about Romance & Redemption – & 1 other 'R' I'd add: Restoration

## 1. Romance (13)

**So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.** Nine months in this one verse.

a. This is the correct order of business . . .

### (1) Boaz took Ruth

“Took” = cultural expression reflecting the Jewish procession to the bridegroom's home

Deuteronomy 20:7 ‘**And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house . . .**

Genesis 24:67 **Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife . . .**

||

**So Boaz took Ruth, and ==>**

### (2) She became his wife

Actual marriage usu. followed an extended period of betrothal (likely more than 9 mo. in this v.).

Wedding celebration proper often lasted a week or more.

### (a) Entire process was a bit different than we're used to

A betrothed couple were regarded as husband and wife (Ge 19:14)

Unfaithfulness during the period of betrothal = adultery (Dt 22:23-24)

Divorce was required to break a betrothal (Mt 1:18-20) – cf. engag.

Yet ==>

Betrothed women were referred to as virgins (Joel 1:8; Lk 1:27)

Sexual relationships took place only after the wedding (Ge 29:21)

Boaz took Ruth, she became his wife ==>

(3) He went in to her {blush}

This is not what most of you prob. think it is. This isn't descriptive of t/physical act (mind out of t/gutter!).

Apparently, sleeping together in t/same room / same bed wasn't t/practice.

“Going in” meant “going in to her room” (for . . . well u know what)  
Judges 15:1–2 Samson visited his wife with a young goat, and said, “I will go in to my wife in her room.” Forget flowers/candy, bring a goat.

(4) The Lord enabled her to conceive

Literally, “YHWH gave her conception.”

(a) Common – partic. in OT: God is sovereign over conception

Sarai to Abram (Gen. 16:2): "Now behold, the \Lord\ has prevented me from bearing children."

Later in Gen. (25:21) we see Isaac [who prays] to the \Lord\ on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the \Lord\ answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Gen 29:31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Gen 30:2 Jacob to Rachel ==> "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

1 Sam 2:6 The \Lord\ kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

Cf. passages that affirm God's sovereignty over deaf, dumb ==>  
Exodus 4:11 The LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth?  
Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the  
LORD?

Particularly in t/Hebrew mind, all that God does encompasses all that He permits – all seen as coming from His hand.

God permitted Satan to test Job & Job could rightly say, *shall we not accept from God both good and evil.*

**(b) Brings up a question relevant to our modern age**

If God is in control over who conceives and who doesn't, what about a couple who can't have children? Should they simply trust God? After all, according to t/Bible he has closed their womb? If he wants to open it, that's His prerogative.

Wouldn't it be wrong to see doctors, have tests, fertility drugs?

Principle of what I call “Available secondary causation.”

Demonstrated in t/OT by God's use of other nations (Babylon / Assyria) to punish t/nation of Israel.

God could have simply caused all the disobedient Israelites to die – to drop dead in their tracks. He used other nations (raised them up to those ends).

God normally uses secondary causes concurrent w/the times. He used t/Assyrians who drove chariots/used archers/swords. They didn't drive tanks or fly F-16s. God used t/means that were in use at the time.

People died of diseases in the past that we have cures and treatments for today. Does that mean God isn't sovereign? You could say, "I can take this pill and be cured but I won't because if God wants to heal me, He will do so." That's foolishness.

There were actually churchmen in the middle ages that believed one shouldn't try to find cures or remedies for plagues because that was trifling with God's judgment.

There were no fertility drugs, per se back then. If a woman was barren, God was the primary cause. If a woman today is barren, God is the primary cause. If a woman today conceives by means of fertility treatments, God is still the primary cause, He just chose to use secondary means. (I hope to touch more on t/theological issue of Providence as it relates to Ruth next week.)

**So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive . . .**

Don't skim over this part. From all we know, Ruth was barren. She was married 10 yrs before she became widow & didn't have children.

Now, in fulfillment of the prayer of the witnesses in the gate (vv. 11–12), Yahweh graciously grants Ruth pregnancy as a gift.

She who had been unable to bear a child for Mahlon after 10 years now has conceived for Boaz after only a few days or weeks.

Hebrew verbs come in staccato fashion. This likely wasn't an extremely long process . . . Marriage – honeymoon – conception – birth (not unlike some we know").

Two gifts: Conception and Birth. Not all who conceive give birth.

(5) She gave birth to a child – most imp. in this context, a son

That son was Naomi's “redemption.” 2d point ==>

1. *Romance*

Then==>

2. Redemption (14)

**Then the women said to Naomi . . .**

a. What women?

I take it to be t/same women we saw back in chapt. 1 – those women who greeted a bitter Naomi returning from her Misery in Moab.

Here her misery has been transformed into majesty – her suffering into rejoicing.

The women in chorus declare ==>

**“Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.”**

b. Problem of antecedents (who is being talked about here?)

Blessed is the LORD – that's clear.

But ==>

Who is the redeemer and is he the same one whose name is to be famous in Israel?

(1) Can't be overly dogmatic

The “redeemer” could be t/newborn son or Boaz. Context favors, in my opinion, t/baby (who is later named “Obed”).



“Redeemer” (Go'el) not used here in t/technical, or legal sense (as it was w/Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer) but in a secondary sense of being a protector and provider.

These women aren't thinking in terms of restoring land rights or raising up a name for Mahlon. They are interested the future well-being of this widow, Naomi.

We see that in v. 15 {cite}

**“Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today [child, O.], and may his name [O] become famous in Israel.”**

Some commentators say that it's t/LORD whose name is to be famous in Israel. But that was already true. And YHWH was t/recipient of blessing in the previous clause. So it seems that the antecedent of this statement be the same as the person of the redeemer – Obed.

Obed's name (extend t/name to his descendents) did become famous in Israel. Obed was t/grandfather of King David.

**1. Romance**

**2. Redemption (14)**

**3. Restoration (15-17)**

**“May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”**

Noami, so concerned w/the well-being of Ruth, putting her needs ahead of her own, now receives a blessing in return.

Ruth 3:11 [Boaz] . . . all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

She was such a woman of excellence that this chorus of women put her value above that of 7 sons (7 being fig.).

Naomi is a proud grandmother (v. 16) ==>

**Then Naomi took the child . . .**

{{And she ran off to Moab and the child's picture is on milk cartons t/o Israel to this day}}

**Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap,**

Please, this isn't adoption. Naomi didn't adopt the child.

Adoption as such wasn't practiced (widely) in Israel and there was no need for her to do so anyway. The child, as first born, was to carry on the family line of Elimelech (through Ruth, Mahlon's widow and Boaz, a near relative of Elimelech).

**and became his nurse.** (as in a nanny)

**And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!"**

Grandson but "son" in Heb. often means "descendant". Cf. v. 15c.

**So they named him Obed.**

What's the connection? Longer, more familiar form was "Obadiah" = "servant of YHWH." Shorter form, "Obed" means "a servant"

Cf. v. 15. Not only a servant and restorer to Naomi, but ==>

**He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

This child in the lap of Naomi would become the grandfather of King David – of Bethlehem

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## 1. Lessons to be learned from this passage:

### a. God's Picture is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp

We've been talking about that all along. Had Naomi not persevered, had she lost hope, she never would have been t/recipient of t/blessings she finds at t/end of t/story.

Compare for a moment how t/story begins and ends.

Ruth 1:19–22

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”20 And she said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.21 “I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Ruth 4:13–17 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.15 “May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. 17 And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

*a. God's Picture is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp*

*b. Postage Stamps are Part of God's Big Picture*

Romans 8:28 "all things work together for Good" can only be true if there are lots of little "all things" that are there to work together.

The best is always future for t/believer in JC

Ruth 1:1a Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. . . .

Ruth 4:17b . . . He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

*When the chips are down, God isn't.*

For the believer ==>

*d. All roads lead to the Cross*

"The cross is proof of both the immense love of God and the profound wickedness of sin. Do you want to see God's love at its pinnacle and sin's vileness at its nadir? Look at the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. See Him hanging on the cross--the sinless, spotless, Lamb of God, bearing the sin of the world. Hear Him cry in agony . . . "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Realize that nothing short of the shed-blood of the eternal, beloved Son of God Himself could have atoned for sin. The weight of our guilt must have been infinitely heavy and the heinousness of our sin indescribably black to require such a sacrifice! And God's love must have been inexpressibly rich to allow it!" [John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, 115]